

NEWS RELEASE

Pacific Northwest Region - Okanogan-Wenatchee NF
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Burns to Reduce Fire Danger, Restore Forest Health

NACHES---Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest fire specialists plan to begin controlled burns later this week in a 6,800-acre Naches Ranger District project area.

Initially, they plan to ignite 50-100 acres around an under burn unit within the Rattlesnake Creek drainage, located southwest of the Nile. Members of the public recreating on the national forest might see smoke from the controlled burns. Residents in nearby communities, such as Nile, Clifdell and Naches might also see smoke.

Fire specialists are conducting the controlled burns as part of the Glass Angel Restoration Project and Tapash Sustainable Forest Collaborative (<http://www.tapash.org/>)

The collaborative works to overcome checkerboard ownership constraints to treat Central Washington forest landscapes in an interagency fashion. Its mission is to improve the ecosystem health and natural functions of the landscape through active restoration projects backed by best science, community input and adaptive management. The Nature Conservancy, Yakama Nation, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service and The Wilderness Society are part of the effort.

The objectives of this week's burning include reducing brush and woody debris that can feed wildland fires that can threaten communities. Burning also promotes a more resilient forest ecosystem less susceptible to uncharacteristically severe fires, insect infestations, disease epidemics, habitat loss and hydrologic events that cause massive erosion.

"Once we have received burn approval, crews will be focusing on igniting and monitoring areas around the perimeter of the unit until we have established a black line" said Fuels Specialist Jason Emhoff.

Black lines are swaths of burned areas that widen containment lines prior to the start of larger multi-day burns. Fire specialists will ignite the burns and patrol them for several days to ensure they do not cross containment lines.

Meteorologists have forecasted lightning for the area so controlled burning will be delayed this week until at least Wednesday.

Smoke from controlled burns typically settles with cold air in low areas in evening and morning hours, even with favorable daytime winds. Some smoke might settle in the Nile Valley and along Rattlesnake Creek so nearby residents should keep doors and windows closed to prevent smoke from entering structures. Motorists on State Route 410 and U.S. Highway 12 might also see smoke.

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“Smoke minimization and dispersal are important factors in the administration of prescribed burning,” said Prescribed Burn Boss Jim Bailey. “Potential impacts of smoke on the community are always a primary concern to the Naches Ranger District.”

All Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. controlled burns are weather-dependent and fire specialists will cease burning as soon as possible if objectives are not being met or weather conditions are unfavorable. Their primary concerns include favorable winds that can minimize smoke impacts to public health and the risk of fire escape.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources regulates smoke management and must approve all controlled burns on national forests within the state. Okanogan-Wenatchee N.F. fire specialists closely coordinate with the state’s air quality managers, after they receive burn approval.

Contact Fuels Specialist Jason Emhoff at 509-653-1492 to receive daily telephone and email notification on forecasted controlled burn smoke impacts on the Naches Ranger District.

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